

Nov 20-87

CII

Benthoff

"Our instincts weren't
wrong - K was wrong."

I.e. he wasn't

"rational" - i.e. realistic -
he didn't understand how
irrational we were;
what he should have
known what we did -
aggressive, illegal,
reckless...

"Determiner depends on
their rationality and our
irrationality (the instincts
of...)"

Lesson of Oct 27 -

Pres + ExCom were
taking a position which
~~most~~ many thought
would lead to strike,
invasion, war...

(though McN thought
next step was tightened
blockade (not, deal?)
(did he know of 48-h ult?))

Look at forecasts on
OCT 27 [not optimistic,
"guesstimate"] without spokesmen
for deal, except Ball! (JFK!)

no support for
VFK position, except
Bell!

(~~Extending~~ : example
of Mod I^{*}, not Mod
IV : a CW consensus
not led by Pres!

What emerged last.
might was a compromise
between Pres & consensus!

* not II or III!

"K" should have
understood how
irrational, unsustainable
we are (Cuba):

ICG, VN

Hyp: Could ^{not} other
policies be as crazy
as these — though
not questioned?!

\cii\postoped
October 31, 1987

NTY Oped came out today: "The Day Castro Almost Started World War III".

Notes on elements left out of piece, in cutting it; and further aspects to be discussed.

1. "Why couldn't Khrushchev just tell Kennedy that the Cubans had fired the AA, and that the SAM firing was insubordinate?"

2. "Who fired the SAM?" Evidence.

3. Whole set of Burlatsky quotes: including, camouflage; assurance by High Command that secrecy could be preserved, that K could get away with it. (B didn't believe; K wanted to believe.)
"I'm certain that Castro caused it."

4. Firefight: possibilities. (and see 2 and 3). Including Mongoose.

5. Relations of superpowers to small allies: On the one hand, the US (and SU) takes great risks to avoid losing or damaging the relationship, or its "credibility." (See K fears of "losing Cuba"--K memoirs, Burlatsky--). At the same time, to avoid this, it risks the destruction of the small power itself! (Cuba, Turkey; VN--both sides!) The latter is part of a general lack of concern about the small power's interests, in a crunch: both US and SU prepared to sacrifice latter, without even consulting: though US showed more concern about informing, bringing Turks aboard (fear of reaction of other allies if Turkey was dumped; and see French reaction anyway).

CHECK: article on Turkish politics at the time; MacMillan's memoirs, on his reaction.

See my involvement in Turkish question: options; cable to Turks, Hare, Finletter; to Nitze...that night, to mirror; crying, with hsr.

6. Estimates of the probability of war: how were they reflected, how were they acted on, or not acted on. Nitze to hsr; hawks to Blight; JFK. What was their basis; what was a realistic basis.

7. What would have happened if K had not folded? If Castro had shot down recon anyway? If JFK had folded on Saturday?

8. Different article: Why did SU get in?

9. Why did Cuba allow missiles? See evolution of crisis out of Mongoose and invasion fears: i.e., a covert operation (for both SU and Cuba).

10. General tendency on US side to ignore independence of SU

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satellites. (Greece; Indochina; NLF; Nicaragua/Cuba/SU; Cubans in Angola...

C:/c ii/postoped

\cmc\Hampson
June 17, 1991

Notes on Fen Osler Hampson, "The Divided Decision-Maker,"
International Security Winter 1984-85, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 130-165

(See note in \cmc\themes, June 17, 1991)

I think of JFK as "creating" a national security crisis (rather than K); but this is as seen by many of the insiders on the ExComm, led by McNamara (and probably the President). Or rather: they may never have seen it consciously that way, but that reflected denial; their own evaluation of the situation clearly implied that. As McN said, "This is not a military problem, it's a domestic political problem," based as much on what JFK had said as on anything K had done.

But that was not the case for the Republican challengers in the election campaign, who were already defining the Soviet non-nuclear buildup on Cuba as a national security problem, calling for a military response: a blockade if not an invasion. They could certainly be counted on to claim that missiles constituted a major national security problem, both for political reasons and because they simply did not agree with McNamara, JFK or McG. (They saw matters more like the JCS, Nitze or Dillon). From their perspective, K had unequivocally created the national security crisis.

At the same time, they were unaware of JFK's Mongoose program--as both a provocation and evidence of JFK's concern and activism--or invasion preparations. (These bear on who initiated what the Soviets call the "Caribbean Crisis.") (Compare the public's ignorance--and perhaps JFK's, in detail--of the preparations of the Eisenhower-Nixon Administration for Cuba I, during the election campaign of 1960).

Suppose--what no one has ever hypothesized--that Khrushchev had moved MRBMs to Cuba in October, 1960--as he could have done! and as he talked about doing only a few months later, in the spring of 1961!--after Nixon had taken a soft line in the debates and had argued against the legality of US intervention in Cuba! The parallel to the Missile Crisis would have been exact, given the relative positions of the Administration and the challenger!

"but, if missiles..." N would shift.

What I believe K expected JFK to do in October 1962--keep the Soviet missiles secret, if he discovered them, till after the Congressional elections--was exactly what Nixon intended to do about the Soviet sub base at Cienfuegos in August, 1970! He was thwarted in this by an "inadvertent" leak by a Pentagon press officer (really "inadvertent"?! This is exactly what JFK would have expected in 1962! Check accounts: was this not an attempt to

force Nixon's hand, based on suspicion either of him or perhaps of Kissinger?). Even then, Nixon used "quiet diplomacy": exactly what K would have expected from JFK. So my (and now Beschloss's) hypothesis about K's possible expectations in 1962 amounts to imagining that K hoped and expected that JFK would behave as Nixon (who, but for false voting in 1960 would have been in JFK's place in 1962) actually did behave 8 years later.

However, K may have not understood the differences in context in the two cases: in particular, the effect on US politics of K's own prior buildup of Soviet materiel in Cuba in 1962, leading to a JFK warning and salience in the 1962 election campaign (as in 1960): all this on top of the Republican-Democratic history on the issue of 1960-61. (There is a new Evans and Novak story of two weeks ago about the possibility of SS-20s in Cuba. Now that Castro may again be a salient target, after Iraq, could this whole issue come back?!)
Now, bananas! (IRBMs?) in Cuba vs. ABM? 4-12

Hampson compares JFK's handling of the missile crisis in 1962 to Nixon's of Cienfuegos in 1970. Compare LBJ's reaction to news of night attacks in the Tonkin Gulf in August of 1964 and in September, 1964!

 See important marginal notes on article!

Crises, January 22, 1987

Averting Failure, Risking Catastrophe

How do catastrophic failures of social policy come about? Detailed retrospective studies of the decision-making process that preceded such failures reveal with startling frequency one or both of two highly paradoxical characteristics of the policymaking:

a) Arguments for proposals, or analyses of a set of options, that totally fail to raise, or address, seemingly-obvious questions about one or more of the alternatives (such as the possibility of the catastrophic failure that does later occur, or of any potential failure at all, let alone any assessment of its probability or scale). Total lack of explicit consideration of what seem obviously critical concerns.

In particular, this commonly takes the form of arguments in favor of a given course--the one that comes to be chosen, eventually with catastrophic results--on the grounds that it is "necessary" to ultimate success of a larger policy, or to avert its failure: but with no estimate offered at all of its cost, or the likelihood of success if it is chosen--or if it is not, i.e. the difference it makes to the probability of success--or of the form or cost of failure of the proposed course.

This emerged in the documentation of the Pentagon Papers research so commonly as the form that proposals took, including winning proposals, that it is identified in my working notes as The Proposal Pattern, or the Desperate Proposal Pattern (since it was associated with the assertion that every course but the one recommended was certain to fail).

Most recently, it has been observed, with some astonishment, in the single decision-making document released by the White House that preceded, and allegedly determined, President Reagan's decision to send US arms directly to Iran (without Israeli intermediaries) in January, 1986, the memo by Admiral Poindexter (drafted by Lt. Colonel North) on which the President was briefed before he signed the recommended Finding of January 17, 1986 that authorized the venture.

As a number of Senators and other critics observed with great perplexity, the memo mentions possible risks (as being outweighed) and implicit reservations by the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense (who "do not recommend" the proposed course) without saying a word as to what these possible risks are, how likely they are to be realized and the consequences if they are, nor what it is about the policy to which the Secretaries object or why. The impression given by this memo is of inexplicably deficient argumentation or analysis, a "crazily" incomplete or reckless decision-making process, preceding (and perhaps causing) the President's fatal decision.

* YET, (see 2) this was a "dominant" choice (short-term analysis!) is associated with a crazy reckless, or controversial course, that does produce (as was claimed) a disaster.

DPP
(expresses)
effects
evaluation
that is true
reflect a
certain
situation
(K/T)

O, I think
(Win, non-win
or lose/non-lose
"DOMINATION"
NO CHOICE"
NO REGRET,
REPROACH,
RESPONS.) *

on
cost!

But in this case--as in most of the others--further investigation reveals that the considerations and risks totally omitted from the given document actually have been analysed elsewhere, and have even been brought authoritatively to the President's attention. (This does not eliminate the paradoxical nature of the fact that even one authoritative decision-making document should take a form so apparently deficient; but it reduces its causal significance in determining the decision).

Even before this Finding had been released, we had learned that Shultz and Weinberger had expressed to the President virtually all of the defects in the chosen course that have now materialized (except for the connection with funding for the contras, of which they were not aware and which may not yet have been conceived by North and Poindexter). I.e., they had predicted with considerable clarity and emphasis the scandal the President confronted after the Iranian arms shipments were disclosed by the Lebanese journal, which was bad enough even before the later revelation by Meese of the contra connection. Yet the President had overruled them.

This conforms to the second paradoxical pattern, which has turned up largely since the research on the Pentagon Papers. In particular, it emerges in the research by Larry Berman on the President's decision in July, 1965 to undertake open-ended escalation of US troop commitment to Vietnam. Using documents and interviews from White House sources, unavailable to the Pentagon Papers study, he found that not only Ball (as was already known) but McGeorge Bundy had argued cogently against this course, raising virtually all the questions and criticisms that later events proved to have been crucially relevant and making estimates that were strikingly realistic.

Opposition by Clark Clifford (in great contrast to portrayals of his position at this time) was equally vehement; like a number of Senators LBJ knew and trusted, he used the word "catastrophic" about the course McNamara proposed and the President accepted. (Bundy's characterization of this course--before the President adopted it--was "reckless to the point of folly." The Pentagon Papers--which lacked this document--present almost no case I can remember of language this strong about the proposal of another Cabinet-level official.)

Paradoxically, in the documentation available, the criticisms and estimates raised by foes of the proposal--which would seem to make an overwhelming case against it,